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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 003076

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CEN, AND WHA/CCA
STATE FOR INR, S/CT, AND DS/ICI/ITA

E.O. 12958: DECL: X1, X5, X6
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ETTC](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [EAID](#) [HO](#) [CU](#)
SUBJECT: (S) CUBAN NOMINEE FOR AMBASSADOR TO HONDURAS
REPORTEDLY APPROVED BY GOH AND SOON TO BE ANNOUNCED;
HONDURAN ARMED FORCES ALLEGE POLANCO IS CUBAN INTELLIGENCE
OFFICER

REF: A. OLSEN/TRIVELLI E-MAIL 11/05/02

[1](#)B. STATE 205386

[1](#)C. TD-314/39339-02

[1](#)D. PALMIERI/TRIVELLI E-MAIL 08/20/02

[1](#)E. TEGUCIGALPA 618

Classified By: Ambassador Larry Palmer; Reasons 1.5 (B), (C), and (D).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para. 9.

[1](#)2. (S) Summary: A Honduran Ministry of Foreign Affairs official has told the Embassy that the GOH has accepted the Cuban nomination of Dr. Elis Alberto Gonzalez Polanco, Chief of the Cuban Medical Brigades in Honduras, as the first Cuban Ambassador to Honduras since the GOH normalized diplomatic relations with Cuba January 26, 2002. The same MFA official has said that this information would be made public shortly. ORCA sources have indicated that the Honduran Armed Forces have urged President Ricardo Maduro not to approve the nomination due to Polanco's alleged activities for Cuban intelligence. It is unclear if President Maduro has in fact approved Polanco. Post is disappointed by the GOH's action and requests urgent guidance on whether EmbOffs should attempt to persuade the GOH to disapprove Polanco's nomination. End Summary.

[1](#)3. (S) The GOH normalized diplomatic relations with Cuba January 26, 2002, 40 years after relations were broken, in one of the last acts of the outgoing Flores Administration (ref E). Prior to the decision Honduras and Cuba had maintained interests sections. The Embassy was not notified in advance of the GOH's action. The decision, which incoming President Ricardo Maduro told EmbOffs took him by surprise, was quickly ratified, in essence, by a January 27 public statement made by Maduro's Foreign Minister, Guillermo Perez-Cadalso Arias. Since then the Cuban diplomatic mission has been headed by a Charge d'Affaires. The GOH has not taken any concrete steps to name a Honduran Ambassador to Cuba.

[1](#)4. (C) EmbOffs have queried MFA officials since January for updates on the possible exchange of ambassadors between the GOC and the GOH (ref D). While the MFA has been circumspect, PolOffs have requested advance notice before the public naming of ambassadors.

[1](#)5. (C) In a November 5 meeting between PolOff and MFA Director General for Foreign Policy Ambassador Mario Fortin to demarche the MFA on the issue of Cuban doctors (ref B), PolOff asked Fortin for an update on the status of diplomatic relations between Honduras and Cuba. Fortin told PolOff that Cuba had nominated and the GOH had approved Dr. Elis Alberto "Orestes" Gonzalez Polanco, DPOB 25MAY1948 in San Pablo de Yao, Granma Province, Cuba, as the Cuban Ambassador to Honduras. Dr. Polanco, as he is commonly referred to, has been the head of the Cuban Medical Brigades in Honduras since 1998 (post-Hurricane Mitch). (Note: There are an estimated 100 (GOH/MFA) to 300/400 (USAID/Honduras) Cuban doctors currently in Honduras. See septel for more information on the issue of Cuban doctors in Honduras. End Note.)

[1](#)6. (S) ORCA sources have indicated that the Honduran Armed Forces have urged President Maduro not to approve Polanco's nomination due to Polanco's alleged activities for Cuban intelligence. (Note: See ref C for more information on Polanco. End Note.) ORCA has not been able to independently confirm that Polanco is a Cuban intelligence officer, but would not dispute that some of the Cuban "doctors" sent to Honduras may be Cuban intelligence officers.

[1](#)7. (S) Despite Fortin's statement that the GOH had already approved Polanco's nomination, Post does not know if President Maduro has in fact given his approval to Polanco. Fortin claimed that the approval of Polanco's nomination would be made public in the near future.

[1](#)8. (C) Fortin told PolOff that there was nothing new regarding the possible naming of a Honduran Ambassador to Cuba, something that Maduro had told Ambassador Almaguer February 1 would not be high on his list of priorities (ref

E). To date Post has not heard of any names being considered by the GOH to possibly fill this position.

9. (S) Action request for WHA: Post requests urgent guidance on whether EmbOffs should attempt to persuade the GOH to disapprove the nomination of Polanco as Cuban Ambassador to Honduras prior to the potentially imminent public announcement of Polanco's approval by the GOH.

10. (C) Comment: Post was disappointed to learn that the Maduro Administration has apparently approved and is set to announce a suspected Cuban intelligence officer as Cuban Ambassador to Honduras. While the process for GOH acceptance of a Cuban Ambassador was set in motion in January, it is unclear why the GOH has not rejected Polanco and demanded that the GOC not nominate someone thought to be a Cuban intelligence officer by the GOH itself. Post notes that the GOH does not appear to be making any movement toward nominating a Honduran Ambassador to Cuba. In addition, the MFA's action to provide advance notice to the Embassy of the Maduro Administration's controversial decision on this issue is in stark contrast with the complete lack of advance warning by the Flores Administration to the USG. End Comment.
PALMER